

The Question of Adequate Protection Against Fire

The question of an adequate protection against fire has again asserted itself. The town has been visited by a disastrous blaze and the deplorable lack of protection has again been demonstrated. The history of Falls City as far as fires are concerned, is a record of good fortune, and this fact more than anything else probably has made us a little negligent in preparing for the emergency that may come at any time. Falls City, a town of over three thousand inhabitants, and covering nearly two square miles of territory, must depend for its protection against fire on two hose carts and probably a thousand feet of old hose that was proven at the German hall fire Sunday to be in very bad shape. These hose carts which are heavy and unwieldy, must be drawn to the scene of the fire by the few men who respond promptly to the ringing of the fire bell. In winter when the streets are in bad condition it is impossible to drag these carts any considerable distance in time to do any good if a fire has gained much headway. And then there is the matter of the organization of the department. The firemen deserve a great deal of credit for what they have done when the circumstances are taken into consideration. They have never had anything like the proper encouragement from the citizens and the wonder is that we have a volunteer fire department at all. And so the situation is; a town of three thousand with a fire protection that would hardly be a credit to a town of three hundred; fire fighting apparatus that would be worse than useless in case of a serious blaze; a volunteer department lacking in organization and systematic efficiency all from the want of encouragement from those whose property they seek to protect.

Let us suppose that fire should be discovered at night in our fine \$20,000 high school building. The alarm would be sounded and a few men and boys would respond. Suppose that a winter storm had made the streets rough and slippery. These few men and boys would drag these two heavy hose carts the eight blocks or over half a mile. The chances are that nobody would know the location of a hydrant, but after hunting for two or three blocks in all directions one would be located and a hose attached. All this time the fire has been gaining in headway. At last the water is turned on and the rotten hose bursts, the water ceases to flow from the

nozzle and the building is doomed. If you think there is no danger of fire being discovered at the high school, you can substitute the Ursuline convent, or the fine residences in Evergreen Heights or the Crook & Towle addition, or the elevators or the new mill and the picture of what would surely happen, would be just as vivid. If the fire broke out in one of the two or three story buildings in the business section of town, the only thing to do would be to stand still and watch thousands of dollars worth of property go up in smoke.

But how can this condition be remedied? It is evident that we have not reached the point where we can maintain a metropolitan fire department, with steam engines and aerial ladders and trained horses. It is just as evident that we have outgrown our present inadequate equipment. There must be a happy medium some where and to find and take advantage thereof, should be the object of those who are the official custodians of the city's welfare. Here is a golden opportunity for the present city administration to distinguish itself.

It occurs to us that the simplest way to solve the problem would be to get more hose carts and distribute them over the city. Small frame buildings sheathed in metal large enough to house a cart could be erected at a nominal cost. The present carts might be left where they are for the protection of the business district; one might be placed on Stone street north of Steele, for the protection of the northern residence portion of the city; one might be placed in the neighborhood of Third and Fulton streets where it could be used in case of fire at the convent or in Evergreen Heights or the neighboring residence properties; another might be placed near Twelfth and Harlan for the protection of the south side and another at Seventh and Chase would be well located. In case of fire the nearest cart could be quickly brought in service and do good work while others were being brought from the more distant stations. It might be possible to arrange a system of signals to be sounded by the bell or the water works whistle, whereby the number of the cart nearest the fire could be designated. It would save a whole lot of delay in hunting for a fire that is not big enough to be seen all over town. The fire chief should be required to look after the equipments and to report regularly to the council

as to its condition and he should be compensated for so doing. No hose should be allowed to become so rotten that it will not withstand the ordinary fire pressure.

The objection will be raised that all this will cost money. Of course it will, but if it would result in the saving of a block of business houses, or the high school, that we all paid taxes to help build, or any other of our fine public and private buildings, it would be money well spent. We have heard people complain because insurance rates are high, but is it any wonder, when the town is practically without fire protection?

We talk a great deal about city parks and paving and sewers, all of which are very much desired and will doubtless come in time, but what we need right now is proper protection for what we already have. Let's don't wait until the morning after the big fire and then suddenly remember that we should have had better protection.

Leased Crystal Lakes.

George Hinton has leased the Crystal Lakes from G. W. and Dave Abbott and will control the ice crop taken therefrom for the period of five years. This with the out put of the ice factory will give Mr. Hinton abundant ice to meet all demands of his trade. Dave Abbott went to Omaha Tuesday night to arrange for removing to that city.

LOCAL AND PERSONAL

Coupe & Thornton cure all their own meats.

The Tribune wants to print all the news. If you know anything good call up phone 226 and if necessary a reporter will call on you for particulars.

Septuagesima Sunday, January 31st, at St. Thomas church: holy communion 7:30 a. m.; holy communion and sermon, 11 a. m. and evening prayer and sermon 7:30 p. m. Strangers are cordially invited to attend all services.—Henry B. Smith, Rector.

Services as usual at the Methodist church next Sunday. The pastor, Wharton B. Alexander will preach both morning and evening. Morning subject "Our Reasonable Service." Evening subject "Following Christ." All are invited to these services.

The McNamara Bros. Tom and Pete, who play the two leading parts in their production of "Mr. Plaster of Paris" at the Gehling theatre, Saturday, Feb. 6th, are brothers of John L. McNamara, who it will be remembered married Miss Clara McKiever of this city. The McNamaras will be guests of Mrs. Thos. McKiever while in Falls City.

MOUNTAIN OF SALT.

At Cardona, Spain—Slowly Being Disintegrated by Tiny Streams.

The mountain possesses one formidable foe, who slowly, but relentlessly, gnaws it from the inside, says the Philadelphia Ledger. Scattered about in the mountain are tiny openings—"monkey holes," they are locally styled—and from out of each of these comes a rivulet, so tiny that it seems powerless to do harm. But little by little these subterranean springs drill their way through the entire thickness of the mountain, digging out long tunnels into which the visitor may enter if he be so inclined. The guide accompanying him will begin by warning him that it is prudent for him to make his will ere doing so, since, owing to the work of the destructive streams, continual salt slides occur in the narrow channels. Great blocks of salt are liable at any time to crush down upon the explorer, crushing him like a fly—the sound of one's voice, the weight of one's body on the soil being sufficient to detach them from the roof. Let the visitor, however, proceed a few steps further; from the ceiling depend stalactites of salt of immaculate whiteness, to all appearances chandeliers; the streamlet seems to flow along a crystal bed, and the drop of water hanging from the sharp point of each stalactite scintillates like a diamond by candlelight. Suddenly the guide pulls you back, calling your attention to a feeble sound akin to that emitted by a squeezed sponge; it is hardly perceptible to the ear, and yet it sounds a warning of an imminent salt slide, and it becomes imperative to retrace one's steps without having been able to penetrate further into the fairylike interior of the mountain.

The mountain of Cardona being private property, three or four gorgeously uniformed keepers are intrusted with the duty of seeing that the inhabitants of the surrounding country do not come and help themselves to salt; it is, however, an easy matter to take away a crystalline fragment by way of a memento. So limpid is the substance that spectacle glasses can be made out of the more transparent pieces. The men employed at the salt works turn out crosses, rosaries, goblets and bottles, which they sell to tourists for a few pesetas.

Appreciation.

People seldom appreciate anything they can afford.

Wm. Nitzsche and Miss Myrtle Moore were united in marriage at the home of the bride's parents, George M. Moore near Arago on Thursday evening, Rev. Elmer Ward Cole officiating.

Beginning with the next issue The Tribune will have an educational department conducted by County Superintendent Crocker. Telephone 74 when you want a nice juicy steak.